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When Will It Stop?

The right hand knows not what the left hand doeth. No truer words than these can be written if one accepts the allegations made by Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri during a speech on October 4, this year. He was alluding to the withholding of facts by the administration about American involvement in Laos.

Symington charged that in addition to the limited information given Congress by President Nixon on March 6, 1971, many other pertinent facts concerning the involvement were uncovered by his subcommittee on U.S. Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad as it took testimony from administration officials.

They discovered that most of the war in Laos is coordinated through and by the American embassy in Vientiane.

They learned that the United States trains, arms, and feeds the Laos army and air force.

That through the Central Intelligence Agency, an irregular army of considerable size is trained, advised, paid, supported, and coordinated, and is deployed in at least four of the five military regions in Laos.

That the CIA is totally responsible for a large number of Thai soldiers serving in Laos through direct cooperation of the Thai government, another

segment of the Laos defenses being financed with American dollars.

All of which adds up, the senator said, to the fact that while Congress and the American public is being kept uninformed as to our total involvement in an unannounced and undeclared war, and dollars needed badly on the home front are being spent to maintain mercenary armies in military activities of questionable value, the Defense Department is seeking additional funding to carry on operations in direct opposition to the will of Congress. Stating that the U.S. had already spent over \$1.5 billion on various military operations in Laos, Symington said, that a cost "in the neighborhood of \$350 million" for a single year was admitted by the Secretary of State in testimony before his subcommittee.

A lot of money, any way you take it. And like the senator, most citizens of the nation will agree that if similar funds were being spent to overcome some of our internal problems the future would look a lot more cheerful. And it would be ironic if future generations could point to the fact that in saving Laos from communism we crippled our own social structure. A possibility that is troubling Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri.